DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 203 HE 014 671

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TITLE How to Write for Development: Better Communication Brings Bigger Dollar Results.
INSTITUTION Council for Advancement and Support of Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 53p.
AVAILABLE FROM CASE Publications, Order Department, Box 298, Alexandria, VA 22314 ($16.50).

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Alumni; *Annual Reports; Business; Educational Finance; Federal Aid; *Financial Support; *Fund Raising; Grantsmanship; Guidelines; Higher Education; Letters (Correspondence); Models; *Pamphlets; Philanthropic Foundations; Private Colleges; Private Financial Support; *Proposal Writing; State Aid; State Colleges; *Writing (Composition); Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

Basic principles of writing for development are examined, along with guidelines and content outlines for writing proposals, annual reports, case statements, fund-raising brochures, annual and deferred giving materials, and development letters. Attention also is directed to the basics of raising money by mail and improving writing skills in general. Before choosing a suitable design for the written request for funds, the following considerations should be addressed: Who will read it? What is desired from the person after reading the request? How does the recipient of the request feel about the project or institution at the present time? What can be said to gain the reader's interest? Why should the reader want to do what is requested? How will the message be presented? Why should the reader want to do what is requested? How will the message be presented? Three possible outlines for writing proposals are considered: the National Science Foundation outline, the CASE Summer Institute (1975) outline, and an outline from Cornell University. It is suggested that annual reports should highlight the institution's major achievement across the widest range possible, and should identify problems and challenges, all in a unified narrative. In case statements, or brochures, colorful language and a glowing tone are important. A comprehensive outline for a case statement, provided by Frantzreb and Pray Associates, is examined. It is suggested that a fundraising brochure should be less grandiose than a case statement. Annual giving letters will be more effective when the following is known about the reader, age (class), gender, reunion or nonreunion year, degree held or major subject, giving record, and institution-related activities. (SW)

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How to Write for Development:

Better Communication Brings Bigger Dollar Results

by Henry T. Gayley

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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PREFACE

Among the most frequently asked questions at the CASE Reference Center are those concerning how to write for development. You CASE members, understandably, want information on how to write grant proposals, develop an effective case statement, and put together direct mail packages that will get your donors to respond. We had material on these topics, but it consisted of a CASE CURRENTS article here, a conference paper there. As a result, we had trouble answering quickly and completely the many queries we received.

Seeking a solution, I called Henry Gayley, Director of Development Communications at Cornell University. Although we had never met, I had been impressed by his article, "Personalize your proposal writing," that had appeared in CASE CURRENTS. In addition to his sensible ideas, I had admired his sense of humor. "Would you consider editing a handbook on how to write for development?" I asked, explaining that he could ask others in the field to write chapters. He promised to think it over.

When we talked again, he asked if he might write the handbook instead of merely edit it. Of course, I said yes, and you now have the benefit of the wit and wisdom of Henry Gayley. May all of your development writing have the good organization and grace of his.

Virginia L. Carter
Vice President, CASE

CONTENTS

How to Write for Development: The Basics . . . . . Page 1

Writing Effective Proposals . . . . . Page 8

Annual Reports That Tell Your Story . . . . . Page 16

Your Case Statement: Printed Salesmanship . . . . Page 20

Fund-Raising Brochures with Appeal . . . . . Page 28

A Fresh Approach to Writing for Annual Giving . . . Page 31

Deferred Giving Messages That Get Action Now . . . Page 39

Development Letters: The Personal Touch . . . . . Page 43

How to be a Great Writer: Work at It . . . . . Page 47

HOW TO WRITE FOR DEVELOPMENT: THE BASICS

INTRODUCTION

When you are writing for development, you have to be far more persuasive than those richly paid advertising writers.

After all, they can promise something easy to understand in return for the reader's money--a gleam in some wealthy bachelor's eye, more miles per gallon, or a crispier taste, to say nothing of your money back if you aren't completely satisfied.

Meanwhile, the best you can promise is a name on a building, undying gratitude, and a paltry income tax deduction. To make it even tougher for you, the advertising writer has a thousand times more money to spend selling a $14.95 kitchen stool than you have for promoting half-a-million or more for an endowed chair.

The advertising writer doesn't work full-time on kitchen stools, either. If the writer is good, the copy chief will be around from time to time, asking him or her to turn out a public service campaign for United Way, Red Cross, TB, or some other deserving charity. These worthy causes, with large amounts of donated talent and media time or space, are after the same voluntary gifts you must have.

That is why your writing should be vastly more compelling. And, because you are speaking for an educational institution, claiming it merits support, your prose should be head and shoulders above the stuff they write for "Head and Shoulders."

WHAT IS GOOD WRITING?

You probably already know the techniques of good writing, having soaked yourself in The Elements of Style by Strunk and White.[1] If you haven't done that, rush right out and buy a copy today, as they say on radio. It's all there. You could even skip the text and just remember the subheads, 8 through 18, under "Elementary Principles of Composition" and those under the chapter, "An Approach to Style."

You will also note, on memorizing those subheads, that the first elementary principle and the third approach to style are nearly the same: both urge you to proceed according to

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[1]Strunk, William and White, E.B., The Elements of Style, 3d. ed. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1979.

a design you have worked out with care. Strunk used to repeat for emphasis, and White never repeats without meaning to do so.

CHOOSING A SUITABLE DESIGN

"Elementary Principle of Composition" number eight says, "Choose a suitable design and hold to it." Before you can sketch a design, suitable or otherwise, you must think about the reasons behind your project. You can start with six key questions:

1. People: Who will read it?
2. Purpose: What do you hope he or she will be inspired to do after reading it?
3. Position: How does he or she feel about your project or institution right now?
4. Approach: What can you say, for starters, that will get the reader's interest?
5. Appeal: Why should the reader want to do whatever you wrote down as your answer to question two?
6. Format: How will you present your message?

1. People. An accurate and thoughtful answer to question one is absolutely essential to your success for many reasons. You should try for the sharpest specifics possible--age, sex, hobbies, business or professional interests, demonstrated involvement with your institution, friends on the faculty--anything you can dig out that will let you think of your reader as a real live human being instead of an abstraction. It even helps to picture your reader as being a specific person you know fairly well, a person who comes close to matching the traits you have put down. Then you can start where your reader is. Knowing where to start is the first step in making your design suitable.

How often does your development piece go to a single individual? If you said, "Every time," you get a gold star. Your mailing list may show thousands, but each envelope is opened, each proposal read by one person. It will help if you keep that in mind as you write, even if you know perfectly well that this mailing is going out to every known matriculant.

You would have an easier time of creating suitable designs if you could subdivide mass mailings by age, gender, degrees earned, or in some other way that would enable you to make a few valid assumptions about your audience. Your approach would then be aimed like a rifle, not like a blunderbuss, and you would start where your reader is.

Carleton College is starting where its readers are, literally as well as figuratively. It ran a marketing survey to determine how perceptions of the college varied from one region to another. Then it tailored its publications for specific regions.

For prospective students from the West, who had the idea that Carleton was cerebral and that Minnesota was unbearably cold, letters and brochures stressed informality and outdoor activities. Easterners got material that emphasized high academic standards for students and faculty, to correct their impression that Carleton couldn't match Eastern intellectual establishments. Home folks from Minnesota believed Carleton was just another of the state's many small colleges, and costly to boot. Mailings prepared for them discussed the college's high national standing and the financial aid available.

Carleton knows that the first part of a suitable design is defining the reader as specifically as possible.

2. Purpose. The next step is deciding what you hope your reader will do as a result of your skillful writing.

In a few cases--annual reports for example--you may not be hoping for any particular response. I have just completed a brochure that had a single mission: to make legislators, cattle breeders, and influential alumni feel good about the veterinary school. For me, it was like an all-expense-paid trip to the Caribbean. People loved it, and that was all they were meant to do. But a 36-page four-color brochure about your proposed new iron foundry and meditation center that neglects to suggest named gift opportunities, ways of giving, and how to make out the check is something else. Namely, a disaster. Such disasters happen from time to time. If you are charitable, you will say the author probably had a suitable design at the outset, but forgot the second part of Rule 8: ". . .and hold to it."

3. Position. The third element in your design is the reader's attitude about the project that concerns you at the moment. Does he or she know a lot, a little, or just plain nothing about it? Is there any evidence that he or she cares? Is the reader inclined to believe anything you tell him or her, or to doubt it? Did the reader get a parking

ticket the last time he or she was on campus? The answers will determine how many words and pages of background and explanation you can cross out, and how many warm, human touches you can put in.

4. Approach. What can you say, for starters, to get the reader's interest? Can you think of anything more certain to interest that reader than himself or herself? (Other subjects may interest some readers more, but no other subject interests more readers some.) Therefore, start where the reader is. (Sound familiar?) You probably pinpointed that location while you were answering the question, "Who will read it?"

Use that approach by talking first to the reader about the reader. Examples:

* When you were at Cornell, Professor Dipstick was already famous for. . .

* As a resident of Tidewater Arizona, you are familiar with. . .

* The Gossard Foundation has already had a profound effect on research in. . . (Opening for a proposal directed to the foundation.)

* A constant supply of gifted young engineers is essential to the future of AB&C Widgets. (Corporate prospect.)

* Because you have shown your concern for the performing arts. . .

"The beginning is the most important part of the work," according to Plato. He didn't say the rest was trivial. You got that reader involved with your good beginning; don't forget him or her in the second paragraph.

5. Appeal. This is where you have to talk about your institution or program. Try to do so with that reader in mind all the time. You remember the legend about the Greek kid who caught sight of his reflection in a pool and was so enraptured that he couldn't stop looking. Eventually he wasted away and they named a flower after him. Big deal. If you act like Narcissus, you and your institution may both waste away, but they won't even name a drainage ditch in your honor.

Explain, promote, and sell that program as clearly (and as briefly) as possible--and remember to express yourself in terms of the reader's interests and concerns. If you come to

realize that reader has absolutely no interest or concern in your assigned subject, it's all right if you cry a little. Then start out after another reader. Or you can try to persuade the reader someone picked out for you that he or she really should care a lot. It's called making a full purse out of a gnat's ear, and it has been done (example on request), but not often.

6. Format. You don't need a peck of words on this subject. I mention it only because you can't choose a suitable design before you know whether your efforts will end up as a typed corporate proposal, an eight-page brochure, or a mass-produced self-mailer.

DESIGNING A SUITABLE DESIGN

Although different formats and different development objectives call for differing designs, the outline for your outlines will probably be the same in every case:

1. Attention: Get your reader to pay attention by writing directly to him or her, on a subject you are certain will be of interest.

2. Interest: Lead your reader, gently but firmly, from your starting point toward the place where you want his or her thoughts to be. No sudden leaps or changes of direction, but snug, understandable transitions all along the way.

3. Commitment: Explain why your program or project is important, not only to your institution, but to your reader and some or all of the things he or she cares about.

4. Action: If you were a door-to-door salesperson, you would call this "asking for the order." In print advertising it's "send in the coupon today." As a development writer you will ask for the gift and you may suggest various ways of giving, three-year pledges, class credit, and other details. However you do it, do it.

THE BOTTOM LINE: ACTION

Your job is to persuade people to give away their hard-earned money. Pretty implausible, if you ask me.

Plausible or not, people gave away more than $43 billion in 1979, according to the American Association of Fund-Raising Counsel, Inc.

Why? Some experts will tell you people gave out of secret feelings of guilt, the fear of death, or because, for some reason, they don't want to go to hell. The experts may be right, but it won't do you much good to believe them. Your natural way of wringing action out of those unlovable motives is to issue threats: "If you don't send in your money today, I'll see to it that Satan calls on you tomorrow."

You'll do much better to think kindly of your reader. (You will be happier in your work, too.) To understand why your reader is going to do what you hope for, think of these motives:

Sense of obligation. He or she has progressed nicely, and realizes that the lessons learned, the habits formed, and maybe even the friendships made at your institution are important. It doesn't hurt to encourage that sense of obligation by reminding your reader that the gifts of long-gone alumni helped pay his or her way through school, even if Daddy paid full tuition without a whimper.

Love and respect for others. High regard for a particular person, living or dead, prompts many gifts. That's why you keep hearing the axiom, "People give to people." When you are after a gift for a new chemistry lab, your donor will probably be thinking not about a phalanx of Bunsen burners, but about some beloved or stimulating old chemistry professor, when he or she puts the numbers on the check.

Obviously, love and respect are the motives for all memorial gifts. And a sentimental attachment for Old Main will account for the gifts to replace its squeaky floors and supplant the dying elms that used to shade its leaky windows.

Self respect--and the respect of others. It's why people take baths once in awhile. It is also why many gifts are made, and it's the compelling logic behind a (respected) development slogan: "Don't give until it hurts. Give until it feels good."

Feeling of being needed. This is closely related to the desire for the respect of others. Another well-known slogan expresses it: "Thanks to you, it works for all of us."

Association with success. Or why some alumni give football scholarships. You can go back to the United Way slogan again, and pay attention to the "it works" part. There is a warning for you in the desire to be associated with success: No matter how much you stress the urgency of a need, you should never imply that disaster is on the doorstep.

If you are willing to stretch this motive a little, as your reader is, it can include association with worthy causes--reducing hunger, disease, and poverty, improving the quality of life, fostering the arts, and similar irreproachable efforts.

Charitable concern. Your readers really do worry--or can be persuaded to worry--about the way rising costs affect your institution. For instance, many of them believe in the value of higher education and are convinced it should be available to qualified applicants, for the sake of American business if for no other reason. And they know that rising tuition costs keep too many brilliant kids out of college. Way back in the days of Alexis deTocqueville a selfless concern for the well-being of others was noted as a widespread American trait. Fortunately, it still is.

Yearning for immortality. You will be quick to point out that this is nothing more than the fear of death expressed in other words. Granted. It is the reason that Bach signed his fugues, so it can't be all bad. Quite a few of your readers may take a dim view of disappearing without a trace, and most assume that your college is not about to do likewise, unless you have pushed too hard on the "need" button. The productive list of named gift opportunities, without which any major casebook would feel naked, is appealing to the yearning for immortality.

These are the basic motives that cause the action you will always remember to ask for. There are a few others, of course: the instinct for self-preservation and the constant searches for love, comfort, health, beauty, and security, to name some of the easy ones. But you can fit most of them into the categories I've already listed. And the rest are more useful to that advertising copywriter promoting Lucinda Snapgirdle's Roll-On Breath Sweetener than they are to you.

WRITING EFFECTIVE PROPOSALS

"Although someone has rightly observed that, on a journey, hope is a good companion but a poor guide, it is also true that you must be on your way somewhere to have that said at all. Most of the institutions who come to us not only march into complexity with resolute confidence but do so accompanied by a sense of pride and direction. We respect and admire these travelers, and we assist them where we can. . . .

"We conclude, as we have in the past, that, in making our final decisions, we are still able to choose between the excellent and the excellent. While this conclusion sustains us in making difficult choices, it is of little solace to the five out of six applicants we must refuse. They understandably find it hard to be buoyant when their reward lies only in the good company they keep.

--William H. Baldwin,
Chairman of the Board,
The Kresge Foundation;
Annual Report, 1980

INTRODUCTION

A single proposal, read by just a few people, can bring in more money than half-a-dozen annual giving pieces mailed out to thousands of alumni. You have good reasons for taking a lot of pains when you write a proposal.

You will probably have no choice. Generally, proposal drafts get shot at by more people on campus than any other kind of development writing. All the faculty members involved in the project want to review it, and they may not agree among themselves on needs, purposes, and methods. Then the dean makes his or her suggestions, and the president may even have a few ideas to add. (See the "Final Warning" in the section on Annual Reports.)

After all that, you go through it another time, correcting grammatical or factual inconsistencies, and sail it past the gun emplacements again--once, if you are lucky. A proposal usually takes more hours than anybody expected, but it can be worth all the trouble.

Your literary style, in most proposals, will be matter-of-fact, simple, and direct. The one exception may be when you

are writing to a devoted graduate about a project close to his or her heart. Then a more personal style, a little nostalgia, even a fulsome fillip or two are permissible.

But foundation boards and corporate gift committees want you to come to the point. Your proposals for them must be tightly organized and loaded with demonstrable facts. (If they are tightly organized, the facts will be pertinent.)

CHOOSING A SUITABLE DESIGN

Apparently, some institutions start with a prospect, then look around for a suitable project. There is nothing wrong with that. In ACPRA's Techniques (June, 1975), Gary Evans said:

> Identify a project. If you do not have a specific project in mind for presentation, then certainly there is no reason to submit a proposal in the first place. In selecting a project, you should consider the past giving history of the corporation, its general fields of interest, whether you are doing anything educationally that is associated with the corporation's primary business function, etc. This does not suggest that a corporation manufacturing electrical widgits has no interest in the humanities, but you may have more success if you are seeking a grant for the electrical engineering department or for one of the physical sciences. Your appeal is improved if your objective can be justified to the stockholders of the corporation as being associated with the corporate interest.

Those are sound thoughts, even though sometimes the shoe is in a different kettle of fish. You have the project, and now you have to find the prospect. The same logic applies. Evans was talking about corporations, but it's easy enough to find what kinds of projects interest a specific foundation.

Whichever is the chicken, whichever the egg, you have to analyze your project, too. Here comes Evans again:

> What is the problem to be solved? This can be a specific problem of instruction or of facilities. It can be a problem of inadequate laboratory space, outdated equipment, inadequate residential housing. A proposal is best if addressed to the solution of the problem. What are the general and specific solutions? These can often be stated in juxtaposition. 'Because of over crowded conditions, it is preferable to add additional housing (general

solution) rather than to reduce our enrollment. We plan to build two apartment-style units for 100 students each (specific solution).'

Who will do the project? This is applicable only if the project involves personnel, and a brief description of the personnel involved would be helpful.

What is the timetable? Explain when the project will begin, what its implementation time is, and when it will be concluded. This adds precision to the proposal. What is its cost? The budget should be clear and straightforward. The budget should also indicate that portion to be contributed by the institution in addition to the amount sought through gifts. In many instances, the institution's portion may be the time and talent of personnel rather than actual dollars. That should be stated to show that the corporation is joining with the institution in an important project, rather than undertaking it by itself. If the project has ongoing costs, explain how they will be met.

What is the method of evaluation? Not all projects lend themselves to convenient evaluation, but for those that do, some statement should be made about the method of evaluation.

Why should the company be interested? The conclusion of the proposal should indicate why the particular corporation would be interested in the project. This might include information such as the number of alumni employed by the corporation, the relationship of the project to general corporate interest, etc.

If you have identified an appropriate project, established its cost within the range of customary corporate giving, and answered the questions above, you are well on the way to writing the proposal.

Evans might not have said that last part if he had been thinking about more abstract projects like academic programs: the improvement of undergraduate education, fellowships for young humanists, or a new course in the economics of the free enterprise system, for example. The questions he suggests still apply, but getting their answers is not so simple.

Your best solution when dealing with things like academic programs is to persuade the faculty members involved to write down their answers to all those questions except,

"Why should the company (foundation) be interested?" That one lands in your ballpark.

Now, with all the facts about project and prospect in your hands, you are ready to make your appropriate design.

Many foundations have done that job for you and offer grant application outlines. Check Foundation Directory to see if your prospect is one of those. If so, you'd be wise to comply with their instructions.

Corporations are less set in their ways, allowing you to choose your own design. Here are three possible outlines:

NSF Outline (modified):

I. Needs and objectives:

   A. How needs were determined,

   B. Objectives as a consequence of assessment of needs,

   C. Relationship of objectives to prospect's concerns.

II. Plan and logistics:

   A. Details on each activity,

   B. Sequence, timetable,

   C. Justification of costs (except salaries),

   D. Justification of request in light of recent advances in the field.

III. Management, evaluation:

   A. Procedures,

   B. Critical decision points,

   C. Staff responsibilities,

   D. Staff qualifications (vitae in appendix),

   E. Justification of salaries,

   F. Evaluation plan:

1. Internal monitoring and modification,

2. Final review.

IV. Merit and justification:

A. Relevance,

B. Value,

C. Merit over alternatives,

D. Long-term effects,

E. Potential for application of results elsewhere.

Outline from CASE Summer Institute, 1973:

I. The project:

A. What is the application requesting?

B. What specific questions are being answered or what hypotheses will be tested by the project?

C. What preliminary conclusions can be drawn based on the research or study which went into preparation of the proposed project?

D. Will the results of the project be published, disseminated, or applied elsewhere?

II. The need for the project:

A. From our own observations,

B. From other authorities.

C. Why are we particularly qualified to carry it out?

D. Why can't it be financed from our own resources?

III. Objectives of the project:

A. Main purpose.

B. Will information be developed that is useful to others?

C. Is there a way we can measure our success?

IV. Related research:

Include a concise review of related research or activity and how the proposed project will extend or modify activity in the area.

V. Procedure of the project:

This section provides the primary basis for evaluating the proposal. Describe the procedure in some detail, listing steps to be followed and, where pertinent, include specific information such as:

A. Where the project will be conducted,

B. Special facilities,

C. Data to be gathered and methods used,

D. Analysis--methods of statistical or other analysis to test hypothesis or answer questions,

E. Approximate time schedule for various aspects or phases,

F. Expected end-product or final report,

G. Project director.

VI. Location of the project:

A. Special facilities,

B. Geographic advantages.

VII. Personnel:

Name, title, and brief statement of pertinent experience of principal investigator or key personnel.

VIII. Budget:

Place this item on a separate page.

IX. Other information:

You may wish to indicate amount of support available from other sources or whether the proposal has been submitted to any other organization. If the proposal is an extension or addition to a previous project, this should be stated.

Outline from Cornell University:

I. Abstract:

   A. Relate prospect's concerns to project,

   B. Summarize project,

   C. State request for funding.

II. The project:

   A. Problem to be solved,

      1. Description,

      2. Its importance,

      3. Related efforts or alternatives,

         a. How this project is an improvement.

   B. Approach:

      1. Methods to be used,

      2. Personnel involved and their qualifications,

      3. Evaluation of results.

   C. Institution's strengths in this area,

   D. Support from other sources,

   E. Budget summarized (full budget in appendix).

III. Summary:

   A. Again relate prospect to project,

   B. Summarize expected benefits from project,

   C. Request for funding.

Only when the proposal is written and you really know what it is about are you in a position to give it a title. The title, like the proposal itself, should be as brief and as clear as possible.

Your proposal may be hand-delivered to the prospect by someone from your institution, along with a little personal salesmanship. Or it may be sent in the mail. In either case,

a cover letter is an essential part of the package. It is a good idea for that letter to invite the prospect to campus for a closer look at the project and its faculty--if you are sure the faculty will behave, that is.

STYLE

If time permits (it seldom does), hide your final draft in a drawer for two weeks. Then read it again. Caution: If you have had the benefit of a typical amount of committee writing, this procedure can be dangerous to your health. You are likely to find that your helpers have slipped jargon and cliches into your carefully polished vocabulary. They have added lard and length to your lean and muscular sentences. You can tell Professor A's improvements from those made by Dean B because A writes impersonally in the passive voice ("The study will be reviewed. . ."), while B's style is personal and active ("We will examine the results. . ."). It is up to you to make sure the style is consistent. And consistently good.

ANNUAL REPORTS THAT TELL YOUR STORY

INTRODUCTION

Because the main function of an annual report is to talk, without interruption, about your institution, its doings and its dreams, you are going to have a hard time involving your reader directly. You can involve the reader indirectly perhaps, because you can assume he or she is at least somewhat interested in what the report has to say. Otherwise, why open it?

Incidentally, there may be far more of those interested readers than you expect. As Kel Arden and Bill Whalen say in Effective Publications for Colleges and Universities,

> A well executed annual report is the one single document that sums up the educational, research, and extension highlights at your institution. To get the greatest mileage out of it as a public relations tool, you should continually think of ways to extend its audience and usefulness. If, for example, you are now printing 10,000 books, the cost of an additional two or three thousand copies should not strain your budget and may prove to be a very economical way to reach many previously overlooked groups. For instance, do you now send an annual report to all new and prospective staff and faculty members? Are copies given to visitors or made available to groups meeting on your campus? Does your admissions office have a supply to send to selected high school guidance counselors and to give parents or prospective students?
>
> There are some other recipients who might put your report to good use. If your school is in a small town, why not send copies to all barber and beauty shops as well as doctors' and dentists' offices? You will probably discover they are well thumbed after a few months. What about your own reception rooms around campus? You may also want to send copies to university clubs, the State Department for distribution tc foreign embassies, high schools, fraternities and sororities, and campus pastors.
>
> The annual report is a report to the public and if it does its job well, it should create a positive impression with many different publics. If you have produced a piece which you feel is great for prospective donors but wouldn't want the parents of a prospective student to see, better have another

hard look at it. The best way for a school to cut its public relations throat is to start saying different things to different people.

As a publication, your annual report is perhaps the most important single piece you produce. It will also rank high among all the ways in which your school communicates with the public. It should not, however, be conceived and produced as a special project standing alone and different from the other informational materials. A good annual report should at all times fit into the total publications program and, no matter how elaborate or simple, must present an open, honest reporting of the facts as they are, not as we wish they might be.

Some institutional annual reports are far less important than they should be. One that merely quotes, verbatim, the reports that deans, department heads, and administrators are required to make to the president each year is almost certain to be disjointed, inconsistent, and lacking in direction. It can also contradict itself along its disorganized way.

In other reports, the same raw source material is simply edited to make sure that each bailiwick has the same acreage as each of the others. These reports may have a dull kind of unity, perhaps, but are likely to be incoherent and studiously devoid of emphasis.

The third type is the best. In it you highlight your institution's major achievements across the widest range possible, then go on to point out problems and challenges, all in a unified narrative, usually signed by the president. You have to be ready for screeches of outrage from a few mentors who feel their splendid accomplishments deserved more attention and space than the president gave them. Even so, this type of annual report is more readable and more effective because it allows the administration to stress the significant points and pass over the trivia.

CHOOSING A SUITABLE DESIGN

If you follow the Arden-Whalen suggestions and distribute your annual report to a variety of people, you may find it difficult to create a writing design that fits both your entire audience and your purpose. The best you can do is decide--or get the president to decide--who heads the list:

1. faculty,

2. governing body,

3. officials in government,

4. trustees,

5. major sources of support,

6. local community,

7. students and their parents,

8. all or nearly all of the above.

If the answer you get is number eight, you are in trouble. It is impossible to write an annual report--or anything else--that will be highly effective for all parts of such a diverse audience. Some group on that list has to come out on top.

When you find out which group that is, you can start thinking about what its constituents want to know (and what you want to tell them.) Put away your crystal ball and get this information directly from the person signing the report. You will save writing time and, quite possibly, production costs if your starting point is on solid ground.

As you know, an annual report is a major effort. You should allow at least four months between initial discussions of audience and objectives, and final delivery. Arden and Whalen recommend this schedule:

I. Concept

Minimum working time--four weeks. Schedule first idea sessions at least four months before your scheduled publication date.

A. Meet with president and other key administrative persons to determine central theme and primary purpose of report.

B. Decide generally what material must go into the report and in what proportion.

C. Outline objectives and audience.

D. Assign editorial responsibility and deadlines for rough copy. Most college annual reports are pulled together from material taken from reports submitted by deans and department heads.

II. Writing and editing

Minimum working time--five to six weeks.

A. Prepare a detailed subject outline.

B. Put together a rough copy draft working from all possible information sources.

C. Drastically edit rough copy to eliminate repetition, items of lesser importance, and conflicting statements.

D. Arrange copy into major topics of interest.

E. Rewrite copy for final editing and research all facts and figures.

F. Write introduction and prepare editorial suggestion list for photography and art. (Note: Not just any photography, any art. Aim your illustrations at your readers just the way you aim your copy.)

That doesn't add up to four months. The rest of their schedule allows three to four weeks for layout and design, and three or four more for printing and distribution.

FINAL WARNING

According to Arden and Whalen:

> Probably no college publication suffers as much from 'committee-itis' as the annual report. Since the usual report sums up the activities and achievements of many departments and persons, the copy is often sent out for a 'going over' by those concerned. This well-meaning action leads only to editorial chaos. Presented with a sheaf of typescript, almost everyone around a college will turn editor with a vengeance. If you accept the changes, additions, and deletions suggested, you face a disintegration of editorial continuity and style. If you ignore the blue penciling of your colleagues, you will find yourself in an untenable public relations spot, and you asked for it.
>
> If at all possible, one person should gather together and write the copy for an annual report, and one person or office should have the responsibility for editing. Many parts of the final copy need to be checked with a variety of offices but make it a practice to check out only specific items. The business office, for example, must provide and verify financial information, but the decision as to how much and in what form this financial material goes into the book is an editorial responsibility.

YOUR CASE STATEMENT: PRINTED SALESMANSHIP

INTRODUCTION

A case statement--an impressive, well-illustrated brochure speaking in favor of some major effort by your institution--is really printed salesmanship. It gives you a much better chance to show your creativity than you have within the rigid structures of proposals and annual reports. Colorful language and a glowing tone are not only permissible, but almost obligatory.

Many development experts agree that the case statement--especially the one that deals with the entire institution--is a management tool even before it gets to be printed salesmanship. Frantzreb and Pray Associates summed up that thought when they said, "The case statement is most profitably used first as an internal document for the institutional family--administrators, faculty, students--to resolve, sharpen and focus their planning and policies into a written statement which interprets the institution to others." (Emphasis theirs.)

Do you see those storm warnings flapping? You are facing a challenge similar to the one you face at the onset of an annual report: Before you can start doing the part you enjoy, someone must get all manner of people to "resolve, sharpen, and focus their planning and policies." Which strengths will carry the flag, which weaknesses remedied, which flaws hidden? Where are we going? You will be surprised (or maybe you won't be) at how many different and opposing opinions flourish in the corridors of Old Main.

Unless you are considerably more powerful than most development people, yell for help. Submit a list of key questions to the president and his or her staff, and let them fight the policymaking battles for you. You can draw those questions from Parts III and IV of the outline that follows. (You are expected to be the expert on Parts I, II, V, and VI, aren't you?)

When you finally get the authoritative answers, and before anyone has a chance to reverse a decision, build your suitable design and outline it in considerable detail.

Frantzreb and Pray Associates provided this comprehensive outline for a case statement:

Title

Table of Contents

Preface or Summary

This section should express the essence of the case in one or two pages and state overall goals.

I. Institutional mission

A. Role in higher education and society

B. Philosophy of education

C. Educational goals and program

D. Salient factors in its history--heritage and distinctions that have endured

E. Factors that appeal to:

1. Students and their parents

2. Faculty and administrators

3. Trustees and volunteers

4. Friends and community

5. Past donors

6. Potential leadership and financial resources

II. The record of accomplishment

A. Academic growth--regular and special programs

B. Students--meeting their needs

C. Faculty and administrators

1. Nature and quality

2. Role in teaching, research, policy

D. Alumni

1. Further education

2. Careers

3. Civic leadership

E. Community service

F. Improvements in campus and physical facilities

G. Financial growth

1. Annual operations

2. Capital--current and endowment

3. Methods used to finance accomplishments

H. Philanthropic support--distinctive gifts and bequests

I. Where the institution stands today

III. Directions for the future

A. Distinctions that must continue to endure

B. New directions

C. Educational objectives, curriculum, methods of teaching

D. Students

1. Number to be served

2. Nature of student body

3. Qualifications

E. Faculty and administrative requirements

F. Governance requirements

G. Financial policies

1. For tuition and fees

2. For investment management

3. For business management

4. For private gifts and grants

5. For public support

H. Physical facilities

1. Campus

2. Buildings

3. Equipment

IV. Urgent and continuing development objectives

A. Priorities and costs

1. Endowments for:

a. Students

b. Faculty

c. Library

d. Laboratories

e. Operation of building

f. Campus maintenance

2. New buildings

3. Redevelopment of present facilities

4. Property acquisition

5. Debt reduction

B. Master plan

V. The plan of action to accomplish future objectives

A. Goals

B. Programs

1. To support current operations

2. To support capital expansion

3. To support special programs or projects

4. Role of estate planning and deferred giving

C. Organization

D. Timing

E. Resources

1. Constituent sources

2. Range of gifts needed

3. Opportunities for memorials and tributes

4. Methods of giving

VI. The institution's sponsorship

A. Membership of the Board of Trustees

B. Membership of the development groups

C. Church/government

You can see that a case statement based on this outline will tell the reader everything he or she wants to know, and perhaps more. It is the kind of outline you should consider when you are writing a case statement for a major capital campaign. For less ambitious projects (new laboratories, a new library or dormitory, renovation of a building, endowed professorships), less ambitious outlines and case statements are appropriate.

Make sure your outline, large or small, makes your intentions very clear. Then run it up the flagpole and make everybody salute. This may sound like too much running in place, but plenty of carefully written case statements have been disqualified at the finish line because somebody up there disliked the whole approach.

CHOOSING A SUITABLE DESIGN

The debates and discussions that result in answers to your key questions are useful in directing and crystallizing administrative policies. But <u>your</u> purpose in writing a case statement is to establish an appropriate climate for giving.

That leads you right back to "attention, interest, commitment, action." (Some people squeeze in "confidence" and "conviction" between "interest" and "commitment." If that makes your life easier, go right ahead.)

<u>Attention</u>. Your theme or cause, which you will probably display in elegant type on the front cover of the case statement, is your first crack at getting the reader's attention. It's your second crack if you have a powerful picture on the cover, but they are almost simultaneous. If the words and the picture are unrelated, your second crack may be your last.

How do you arrive at a theme? You can write the theme first, and make sure that all that follows fits. Or you can write your case statement first, read it over, and see what theme emerges.

Either way, creating a theme acceptable to all can be one of the most demanding parts of your case statement assignment. See if you can limit the decision-making group to two people: you and the president. A theme is like the menu at a fancy restaurant. Some people love hamburger, others prefer octopus under glass, and you can't please all the people all the time.

Everybody knows a theme should be "memorable." Few people know what makes it so. Would you say, "The halt that revives" is memorable? How about, "The pause that refreshes"? Repetition made it memorable, not the words or their meaning. The word "generation" belongs to Pepsi, not Dr. Pepper, only because of repetition.

This merely means that your theme will be remembered if you say it often and loudly. Repetition makes it memorable, but not good. To be good, your theme should convey an understandable and laudable idea in clear terms. If, having done that much, you can make it trip pleasingly off the tongue, huzzah. Unfortunately, many themes sound like the titles of TV soap operas.

Si Seymour said, "Most causes prosper best in terms of keeping faith with the past, keeping step with the present, and keeping some real or implied promise to posterity." In other words, your theme should express a thought that stretches beyond your need for a lapis lazuli loo.

Interest. When you start with the "keeping faith with the past" part, you may have a chance to add timeliness to some moss-covered ideas. For example, Cornell's less-than-sprightly motto says, "I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study." (Better, at least, than "Cave canem" or "In vino veritas.") When the founders unfurled that phrase, they meant it to be revolutionary. Now, when "equal opportunity," "emerging nations," and "information explosion" are the phrases from which philippics are made, those old words take on new vigor.

Keep your backward looks brief, though. Their real purpose is to show that your institution didn't hop on the bandwagon yesterday but, instead, has been in charge of rotating its tires ever since the wheel was invented.

Your reader's interest in all this begins to heat up when you show that your hallowed traditions qualify you for "keeping step with the present." The present, as you will soon prove, consists of an array of problems that your reader knows and cares about. Because your institution is beginning from such a solid base of noble traditions, from so many eminent successes in the same area, it turns out that these are not problems at all, but opportunities.

Commitment. You have defined the problem/opportunity, and you have made it clear that the reader should care. Now explain what your institution is exceptionally well qualified to do about it. Recognize the difficulties. You don't want the challenge to look like a cream puff, and you don't want the institution's solution to sound half-baked. Having acknowledged the difficulties, explain how you propose to overcome them.

Of course, all this is built around your "real or implied promise to posterity." So it leads to your optimistic summary of what the effort will mean to coming generations, the future of education, humanity, or whatever else is big and believable. Be careful, though. If you fail to be truly believable you will end up with a half-baked cream puff all over your face.

Arden and Whalen suggest that the next section of your brochure could be headed, "We tried, but. . ." They explain:

> We--the college--after showing that we have the pedigree for performance, that we have a studied plan for the future, must establish without a doubt that we have a serious problem, that there is something standing in the way of our reaching our goal. And this problem, not surprisingly, is insufficient money.
>
> It is important at this point in the brochure to emphasize that your school has worked hard to solve its financial problems. Show clearly that you have struggled valiantly and not unsuccessfully to raise faculty salaries, provide much needed science labs, build a new library, modernize Old Main, construct residence halls, and strengthen the research program.

Action. Here is where you ask for the order. Back at the beginning of this piece is a sentence saying, "Strunk used to repeat for emphasis, and White never repeats without meaning to do so." With those two leading the way, the following repetition is okay: ". . .a 36-page four-color brochure about your proposed new iron foundry and meditation center that neglects to suggest named gift opportunities, ways of giving, and how to make out the check is something else. Namely, a disaster. Such disasters happen from time to time."

Don't let one happen to you! It is not necessary to wail, "We need money! Send it in!" But if you follow that "We tried, but. . ." part with a shopping list, alert people will get the point.

Because your case statement probably has a pretty high cost per page, you will want to keep the "ways of giving" portion brief. Titles and one-sentence explanations will serve. Then offer more information. Being very foresighted, you have already included details on stock transfers, gifts of real property, gifts by life insurance, and all that arcane stuff in an inexpensive folder with an integral reply card.

CONCLUSION

When you began to put your case statement together, you accidentally persuaded many on-campus people to think more carefully about the many aspects of their dreams.

Now that it is complete, the statement begins to fulfill its real purpose, which is to help the people out there asking for gifts. They are the ones who can put your message across most irresistibly, talking face-to-face with prospects. They can see when Daddy Warbucks begins to squirm a little, a clue that it is time to turn the page. They know when Mrs. Midas' breath begins to come in short pants, a sign that they really have her attention. In other words, they can talk about your institutional needs and goals in terms directly related to the concerns of a specific prospect. Your case statement has told them what they need to know. Then they leave it on the coffee table, as a reminder.

FUND-RAISING BROCHURES WITH APPEAL

INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this discussion, a fund-raising brochure is a publication that is less grandiose than a case statement. It wants less money, it takes less money, and it acts more rapidly.

You can write leaflets, folders, flyers, booklets, and brochures on a fascinating array of subjects: memorial funds, book funds, campus beautification, support for specific academic programs, annual giving--all the small teeth in the big gears that move your institution forward.

If you are inclined to feel these "small teeth" are not worth your careful attention, please change. Or quit. As he started in his third year with New Yorker, E. B. White told his brother, "I discovered a long time ago that the writing of the small things of the day, the trivial matters of the heart, the inconsequential but near things of this living, was the only kind of creative work I could accomplish with any sincerity or grace." Look where that got him! Because he uses care, sensitivity, and imagination as he writes about these "trivialities," you suddenly realize that he has turned them into eternal verities.

CHOOSING A SUITABLE DESIGN

You are in luck! Most fund-raising brochures are written for a carefully selected audience that is already favorably inclined or at least tractable. You are blessed with that "favorable climate for giving" from the outset.

Attention. When you have something new to say or show about a familiar subject, you are off to a good start. If there is nothing new to say, say it in a new way. Old or new, your message should aim at getting your reader involved immediately: You don't have room for a lengthy warm-up session and a plethora of ancient history. Joy Ann Fischer, associate director of university publications at The Ohio State University, writes, "Many introductions are both dull and useless. Your reader may give up before he* gets to your first point. Use a short introduction, if any, to make quite clear what is coming, the questions that will be answered."

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*(Ms. Fischer also writes, later in the same document, "Change the copy to include the pronoun 'she' as well as 'he.'" Do as she says, not as she does. That is all that will be said here on the thorny subject of sexism.)

Many fund-raising brochures are, by nature, more informal than proposals, annual reports, and case statements. If it is appropriate to the cause and audience, your design can call for bright and cheerful copy. For example, when the longtime dean of Cornell's Hotel School retired, the school wanted to endow a professorship in his honor. The brochure pictures the dean smilingly perched on the edge of a podium, legs dangling. Headline: "Robert A. Beck Deserves a Chair." Naturally, you wouldn't make jokes like that if the chair were in memory of rather than in honor of the dean.

Interest. In a few brochures, you can play up reader benefits: the tax savings and increased spendable income the donor will get from a life income agreement, for instance. From there on, the benefits become less tangible: the donor's name on a bookplate, seen by generation after generation of eager students; membership in a giving club; the donor's name on a plaque along with names of other donors to the same cause; the gratification of showing affection for a respected teacher or honoring a departed friend; the satisfaction of advancing research and education in a study important to the donor.

You might go back to "The bottom line: Action" (page 5) for the reasons people give, and see which apply to the subject you are working on.

Commitment. You can win the grand award in the national CASE competition, and cause your bursar to complain that checks are spilling out of his or her "in" box. You will get a handwritten thank you note from the president. You can put your institution in the forefront of quelque chose, move to a corner office with a view, and be the inspirational force behind educational advances that will benefit humanity for centuries to come.

If you believe all that, you are committed. You should be. The point is that you make your readers care about your cause by demonstrating its importance and the benefits it promises.

Action. State the need! Ask for the gift! Make it easy to give! As in case statements, you need not come right out and yell "Send in money." A response card, either inserted or printed as a tear-off page of your brochure, makes the message plain enough for most people. If you can afford a postage-paid and self-addressed reply envelope, you make giving easier still.

Do you think all this is belaboring the obvious? Not so! This office recently received an attractive brochure with an excellent headline, attention-getting cover illustration, and well-written copy. But the well-written copy failed altogether

to say how much money was needed. In fact, it failed to say that any money was needed at all. Under those circumstances, it is not surprising that no mention was made of where the gift should be sent or how the check should be made out. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe the institution doesn't want a gift. Maybe it has all the money it needs for this cause, with a little left over for mailing out brochures.

Zealous donors (if there are any) will deduce that somebody sent them this piece in the hope that they would make a gift. But how much is appropriate? Good old zealous donors can fish the envelope out of the trash can and learn who paid the postage. But what do they write where it says "Pay to the order of. . ." to make sure the gift ends up in the right account? And how many prospects will go to that much trouble? Why make it so difficult?

Let us hope that most people got a covering letter along with the brochure, and the letter filled all the gaps. But the necessity for including a stack of routine details interferes with the tone of the letter and steals valuable space from it. Also, having none of that crucial information in the brochure itself completely eliminates the pass-along potential of the printed piece. A simple response device (coupon) would have changed the whole picture.

You have other good reasons for incorporating a coupon. One is copy testing. It tells you what appeals work. It lets you know how much money came in over the transom and how much more came in as a result of your splendid writing. If the answer goes the wrong way, you will know better next time.

And then there is that CASE award mentioned earlier. The judges are always asking for measurements of success. If you can tell them the brochure cost $400 to print and mail, and you received $15,000 in gifts and pledges attached to your coupon, those judges will have to pay attention.

STYLE

The best thing about fund-raising brochures is that no one style is right for all of them. They give you a chance to display your versatility.

If you are soliciting gifts in memory of a beloved classics professor, it won't hurt to dig a line from Vergil out of your memory (or Bartlett). You wouldn't do that when you are after travel expenses for the wrestling team, and your wrestling team copy will not sound like the prose you write when the travel money is to send budding archaeologists out on a dig. Dig? Put on your chameleon suit.

A FRESH APPROACH TO WRITING FOR ANNUAL GIVING

INTRODUCTION

Your annual giving campaign, if it is like most, includes some booklets and brochures, telephone campaigns, and more letters than anybody but you would believe.

One dictionary defines a letter as "a communication in writing or printing addressed to a person or a number of persons." Right. Because your aim is to make each number of persons as small and as well-defined as you can, always write as if you were talking to one person, not a gang.

People laugh (or sneer) at computers and word processors for addressing letters to "Professor Germ Lit" and starting off "Dear Germ," but the electronic marvels do help you--or can help you--plan mailings that are aimed like rifles, not like blunderbi.

Squeeze as much out of your programmers as you can. Your annual giving letters will be far more effective when you know exactly who is out there:

1. By age (class);
2. By gender;
3. Reunion or non-reunion;
4. By degree held, or better still, by major subject;
5. By giving record;
6. By institution-related activities (trustees, secondary schools committees, booster clubs, etc.).

CHOOSING A SUITABLE DESIGN

The decisive factor in your alumni annual giving design is your need for prompt action in almost every case. People often put your appeal, pledge card, and return envelope aside, planning to do something about them later. Much less often, they follow their plans. Procrastination is the thief of alumni annual gifts.

Your design, then, is single-mindedly aimed at getting attention fast, getting interest fast, getting commitment fast, and getting action today. Tomorrow at the latest.

There are many ways of accomplishing all these good things. Each is more appropriate for one of your alumni groups than it is for the others. If you can drag yourself away from that plush office at reunion and homecoming times, go out and chat with the most popular members of various groups. It will help you visualize your reader when you write to him or her later.

Attention. Why not begin where that reader begins? If your appeal is going out in the same old envelope you have been using for years, can you blame the recipient for expecting the same old appeal? And for giving no more than he or she gave last year, if at all? If you are using the same old envelopes because you have an attic full of them, you can at least send them back to the printer and slap an attention-getting message on the front.

On a last-minute reminder to lybunts, for example, you might write, "Whatever happened to. . ." with an arrow pointing to the address label. (Then you can spend the next month dreading the letter that gives you your answer: "He skipped town in the company limousine, taking his secretary with him." Or, "She absconded with the company payroll.")

Teasers encourage people to open the envelope with a little ready-made attention. If the letter inside begins with an anecdote about a beloved professor who flourished when your reader was in college, just the professor's name or picture on the envelope can get the recipient to wonder, "What is this all about?" Then you tell him or her.

Now that you lured your reader into opening your envelope before throwing it away, don't let go!

> "Dear Alumni:
>
> I hope each and every one of you will make a big gift to the annual fund this year. . ."

How's that for an opener? It assumes the letter is being read by nothing less than a pair of Siamese twins, both alumni. Then it ignores the twins (no easy trick) in order to begin with Narcissus's favorite pronoun. By the time it gets back to the twins, they have shown their Siamese pique by turning into a mob consisting of one "each" and uncounted "everies." While all this is going on, the only thing the writer can think of is "Send money!"

You would never do anything as bad as that, would you? You would remember that popular person you sought out during reunion, and pretend you were writing to him or her. Incidentally, there is no law that says you must begin a mass-

mailed letter with a formalized (and essentially meaningless) salutation like "Dear Alumni," "Dear Classmate," Dear 49er," or "Dear Old Siwasher." (NOTE: In her "A to Z Checklist," reprinted at the end of this section, the first thing CASE Vice President Virginia Carter says is "Remember, no rules work 100 percent of the time." That may make it okay for me to disagree--mildly--with her Rule G: "Salutations of some kind are better than none.") Many effective fund-raising letters start right off with an attention-getting thought, almost like a headline:

"Remember old Professor Miller and his dog,
ambling home at sundown?"

"When you took biology,
did you have an electron microscope?"

"How many of your classmates
had government loans?"

If anyone should have a salutation, and a personalized one at that, it is a member of one of your giving clubs. A major donor deserves as much personal attention as you can provide, and you should make strenuous efforts to keep such people out of your routine mass mailings. Among other things, you don't really want to tell the lady who sent you an unrestricted $5,000 check last year that "Any gift, no matter how small, will be welcome."

This section began by urging you to find a fresh approach. It is about to end by urging you not to believe everything you read here. If an idea brought in millions last year, chances are that a subtle touch or two will make it look new this year. Anyway, if your readers remember your headline 12 months later, it was either astoundingly wonderful or deplorable. Don't kill the goose that is laying golden eggs just because she is a year older.

Harrowing yarn: At Cornell, we make a big thing of reunions. Would you believe that a staffer objected to a reunion idea this year because we had used it (successfully) last year? Now, if a guy in the class of '55 is married to a gal in the class of '56, they will see the same idea two years in a row, but the percentages are underwhelming.

In other words, if your approach is working, improve it, modify it, use it elsewhere--but think twice before you junk it. The feeble ideas that most need your love are the ones you should scrap.

Interest. You chose that attention-getting opener because it leads inexorably to the subject that concerns this par-

ticular reader. In the examples above, Professor Miller and his dog are ambling toward some remarks about the vigorous, upward-bound young faculty members (paid out of unrestricted institutional funds) who are destined to be similarly revered and have dogs of their own some day. The electron microscope is there to reveal the need for providing up-to-the-minute lab and teaching facilities, and you know where to go with the one about government loans.

Don't go too far, though, without looking over your shoulder to make sure the reader is coming along. Talk to him or her directly, in simple, lively language. Keep it brief, and watch your transitions. Get in as many personal references as you can, making constant use of that detailed information you gathered about the specific group, and relating that information to the institutional needs you are about to stress.

Commitment. Now you turn to showing how the subject you have been discussing is significant (meaning: why the reader should care), and why he or she should be proud of your institution's part in it. And you demonstrate genuine, believable need.

The word is "need," not "peril." Even your most loyal alumni will think twice before they mail their gifts to a sinking ship.

The need isn't always an institutional one. If a foundation has offered a major grant on the condition that it be matched by your alumni, you have a pretty clear need. If the class of 1957 has set itself a 25th reunion goal of $25,000 and has $5,000 and five weeks to go, that's a need. If the $25,000 is earmarked for some specific worthy purpose, you have two needs working together to get the results you want. How lucky can you be?

Action. You know it from your own experience: Everybody within reach of the mailcarrier gets requests for money several times a week. At least half of those pleas promise something in return: a charter subscription to The Lily Gilders' Guide, or a set of pewter figurines. The rest are urgent entreaties on behalf of heart-rending causes--like yours. How are you going to tower above all those others when you get to the point where you say, "Send money"?

You have one powerful advantage. You know (or should know) a lot more about the reader. He or she graduated a known number of years ago and is therefore in a particular age bracket now. If his or her class is working on a reunion goal, he or she is likely to have at least a passing interest in the fact. He or she remembers Professor Miller's dog, gave last year (or didn't), and is a member of the baseball

boosters club. The more you fine-tune your mailing list, the more direct and personal your request for action will seem to be.

You will be telling your reader how soon you hope to hear from him or her, and what the goal is. This second part opens a good route, in a mass mailing, for suggesting the size of a gift: "That goal is 10 percent over last year's record-breaking total. You helped us in that fine achievement, and I hope you will consider increasing your own gift by at least 10 percent." When you can slice up your mailing list by giving levels, you can also urge a move to the next higher bracket of giving club.

It's easy enough to intend to give away money, but hard for most people to get around to doing it. Arden and Whalen, in Effective Publications for Colleges and Universities, agree:

> We are faced with the great dead weight of public inertia. We want our readers to respond to our message even if it is only the mental action of thinking about what they have read. Usually, however, we ask them to do things they don't want to do. They're lazy. They don't want to write for further information, they don't want to fill out application blanks, they don't like to cut out coupons, and they hate to lick stamps and seal envelopes.
>
> The easier we make it for our direct mail audience to respond the more will respond. Cater to their lazy bones. Always include a business reply card or envelope. You will pay only for live returns. Many a good intention has been lost while searching for a stamp. Don't ask for too much information on a coupon. Checking boxes is simpler than writing a short essay. One popular direct mail device consists of a letter and reply card combination where a person's name is addressed through an envelope window onto a business reply card. The recipient need only tear off the card and put it into a post box. A mailing of this kind has actually been used successfully as a preliminary announcement to teachers interested in summer session work. We must assume that most of these prospects could sign their own names and yet the mailing in which this was already taken care of for them far outdrew a similar mailing where they were asked to write their names and addresses. An added bonus: You don't have to decipher illegible handwriting.

You can make return envelopes work for you, too. Central Michigan University has had great success with a message on the flap saying "(I) (We) intend to give annually until fur-

ther notice. SEND REMINDER EACH YEAR ON_____."
CMU says close to 40 percent of its donors check this box, and all the university has to do is send out reminders on the date indicated. You will have to admit there may be a snare in this delusion: A simple reminder simply will not do. It seems likely that most of those automatic donors will keep right on giving at the same level, deprived of the inspiration and stimulation that a zealous development writer like you would otherwise furnish several times a year. So there you are, sending a "reminder" that attempts to get their attention and interest, explains the need, and asks for increased gifts. It's nice to have the long-term commitment, but it doesn't really save you much work.

A deep flap envelope can give all sorts of information that you can use the next time around: Does the reader have a child applying for admission? One or more children who were accepted? Rejected? Speaking of legacies, has the reader included your institution in his or her will? Would he or she like some information on giving clubs? On life income agreements?

Action: additional ideas. When you are thinking about mass-produced letters, do everything you can to make them look as if they were individually written. Some techniques:

1. Signature in a different color;

2. Underlinings and marginal notes in signature color and handwriting, to emphasize key points;

3. Postscript, "wrote by hand," to cover your key point. (It will probably be read before--or instead of--the rest of your letter.)

Checklist. Virginia Carter worked up a useful "A to Z Checklist" that was printed in CASE Currents (and elsewhere). She included just about everything you have read in this chapter and quite a few things that were overlooked:

The ABCs of raising money by mail

BY VIRGINIA L. CARTER
Editor

A

Remember that no rules work 100 percent of the time. Because your own constituency differs from every other, you can learn most from your own successes and failures. To do this, keep accurate records on each mailing.

B

We're competing for our reader's time. Picture your graduate getting home from work. Wants a cold drink. Remembers that the refrigerator is broken. Kids rush up. Television blares. Then he or she picks up the mail. About 85 percent of the time, your letter will be opened, but the recipient takes *only a few seconds* to decide whether to read it. It becomes vitally important that you grab the person in those few seconds.

C

Because your mail will probably be opened, your next concern is whether it's read—*and acted upon.* Having it read is not enough.

D

The best prospects in direct mail are "former customers"—or, in our case, former givers—and others like them in demographics. Cultivate your former givers. Study them and go after people similar in age, geographic location, college major, occupation, income level, or whatever. This will pay off better than going after dissimilar groups.

E

For best results, segment your prospects. Don't consider them one big mass. Analyze them by dollar-level gifts, frequency of prior gifts, school/college affiliation, major, length of time since graduation, geographic location, and so on. This lets you mail to subgroups in a more personal way.

F

A letter is the single most important piece you can use in any direct mail effort. Because of this, your letter should look like a letter. Use typewriter type—and large enough to be easily read. Be sure it carries a signature, even though it's printed. The 7¼ x 10½ monarch size letter seems to work best for big donors. (Even smaller note paper has worked well for some major charities.) For mass appeals, 8½ x 11 generally draws best.

G

Salutations of some kind are better than none. You might use "Dear Beloiter," "Dear Alumnus/a," "Dear Carolina Graduate," "Dear Member of the Class of 1935." You can use a headline-type salutation on a letter, but consider breaking it up into three or four short lines, placed on the left. This makes it look like a salutation.

H

When you use the letterhead of a volunteer, also mail in an envelope with his or her cornercard. Do not mix volunteer stationery and a college/university envelope. But beware of new third-class bulk mailing regulations. If you use a volunteer's envelope, you can't use the college's bulk permit.

I

In writing your letter, write to just one person. Use a conversational style with short words, short paragraphs. Don't hesitate to restate important points; your reader may only read part of the letter. Focus on two groups of motivations: (1) altruism, idealism, and desire to improve conditions and (2) obligation, ego gratification, and gratitude. Outline the need to be met. Tell how your institution is meeting the need. Get the reader personally involved. Establish a close link between his or her support and accomplishing the goal. Show what his or her gift can accomplish. *Ask for the contribution.* Suggest an amount if possible. Tell how to make out the check. State a time limit that issues a call to action.

J

Fit the length of your letter to your message. Make the letter long enough to state the case—and no longer. "Likely givers" will read long letters. Non-givers won't, so shorter letters are probably better for them.

K

Bear in mind the power of the P.S. Readership surveys show that it's often the "most read" feature of a letter. The P.S. gives letters a personal touch. Some experts recommend having the letter-signer handwrite the P.S. if it's under 25 words; use the typewriter for a longer P.S. Use this spot for a quick restatement of the case for support and/or a "call to action."

L

If you plan a series of letters in an annual fund campaign, develop a common theme and find ways to say the same things differently. Even if people don't give, make them feel good about having read the letter and good about themselves. Make them eager to read your next installment. On the other hand, each letter must stand on its own. You can't expect many readers to remember details from a previous letter.

M

In writing your letter, translate "product features" (more books for the library, additional scholarships, or whatever) into "donor benefits" (build a stronger university, educate new leadership for society, make your degree mean more, increase your prestige). Use the letter for personal, emotional appeals. If appropriate, put facts, details, pictures in an accompanying brochure.

N

So far as I know, a "publisher's letter"

hasn't been used in fund raising. Direct mail marketers use this extra letter—usually a single page—to convince those who may be wavering. It often increases sales by as much as 25 percent. Originally the publisher's letter used the "frankly I'm puzzled" approach, expressing surprise that the prospective customer would reject such an obvious good deal. Recently, some publishers—such as Time-Life Books—have taken the letter to new levels of sophistication. Fund raisers might consider adapting the publisher's letter. For example, suppose you are soliciting gifts for a new building or a named professorship. Include, along with the main letter and other materials, a special memo to the president from a beloved emeritus professor. Reproduce in handwriting on the outside of the memo, "Here's a message that you will find of interest."

O

Color? Color seems to help in most everything, but we don't know *which* colors. There seems to be no consistency. One expert says that older folks prefer cool colors (blue or green instead of red). Another suggests yellow as a positive and acceptable color. Still another direct mail authority consults promotions of the fashion industry to get the "in" colors for the year.

P

Commercial direct mailers have found that "the bigger the better" when it comes to the accompanying brochure. They have also been successful with lots of small insertions.

Q

Individualize and personalize as much as possible. Well-organized class agent systems work because of involvement and personalization. Agents themselves get involved and give. Then they are more effective with their classmates because they personalize their letters. Even a handwritten P.S. by a class agent makes an appeal more appealing.

R

Carbon copies of letters with a handwritten message printed on or with a note attached ("We haven't heard from you yet and there are only three weeks left in this fund year") can pull up to 80-90 percent of the original mailing.

S

To call attention to a special paragraph(s) in your letter, use a second color. Other possibilities: underlining, indentation, all caps.

T

Here's an idea that not everybody will agree with but that does work. Ask for a second gift from those who have already given. Use the same mailing as to non-donors but with a hanger acknowledging the previous gift and making a pitch for another.

U

"Any piece of mail will do better if put in an envelope." Most direct mail experts agree on that point, and the rule holds even in situations where a secretary opens the mail. Fund-raising mailings do better in a standard envelope (no. 10 or monarch). This is particularly true if mailed to a business address; there, use standard business style envelopes without gimmicks. Use envelope stock of high enough quality to arrive in good shape. Rips and tears on the envelope give a bad impression.

V

Window envelopes: Almost without exception window envelopes work better. You can then put your label on the response card or reply envelope flap. This makes it easier for the respondent to answer and makes the donor's name/address readable. An exception: When you're mailing to a high-status group, put the address on the envelope as in a standard letter.

W

Most of us can't afford first-class mail except for gift club-level donors. Use attractive commemorative stamps for them. With whatever class mail, a stamp pulls better than a meter tape and a meter tape pulls better than an indicia. Many mailing houses use metering machines to seal your envelopes so you can get your third-class nonprofit mail metered at no additional cost. Reproducing in typewriter type the letter signer's name over the cornercard can kick up response 2 percent.

X

Reply envelopes are a must in an effective direct mail package. Make it easy for the donor. Leave enough space for easy writing or attach the graduate's computer label to the pledge portion of the envelope. Use the reply envelope copy to call the reader's attention back to the theme or message of your letter. Consider a color for the reply envelope that blends with your mailing.

Y

Experts debate the merits of paying postage on the reply envelope. It probably pays to affix a stamp on the reply envelope for donor club members when you seek memberships or renewals. This says, "I know I am going to hear from you, and I'm willing to pay for your reply." Some experts suggest using a plain, unstamped reply envelope for small but steady donors, medium-sized donors, and all donors who get their mail at business addresses. Small, occasional, or "hardly-ever" donors should get regular business reply envelopes (the kind with lots of lines on the front). If the latter two kinds of segmentation are impossible, the trend is to plain, unstamped reply envelopes.

Z

Test, test, test. No big-time commercial mailer would launch a campaign without first testing several versions of a direct mail package. Shifts in color or size of the pieces, wording of the letter, type of postage—all can influence returns. In testing, change only one element at a time so that you will know what is causing the difference in response. case

DEFERRED GIVING MESSAGES THAT GET ACTION NOW

INTRODUCTION

You have probably heard some semantic debates about the name of this particular game. As far as the donor is concerned, there is nothing deferred about an annuity trust, a unitrust, or a life income agreement. The assets are out of the donor's hands the day he or she makes the gift. When you think the way the prospect is thinking, that fact will be at the front of your mind. Some institutions call them planned gifts, a title that not only covers the waterfront but many offshore islands. Most major gifts, for example, require some planning by the donors.

Whatever you call a deferred gift, stately is the word. After all, you don't want to sound too eager for gifts to "mature," and you are talking about mortality, a subject many people wish would go away. So be gentle and loving, avoiding harsh words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Remember, too, that most of your best prospects are over 50 years old and are inclined to prefer traditional language.

CHOOSING A SUITABLE DESIGN

Many of the subjects you deal with when writing for deferred giving are fraught--with alarm, in the first place, then with apparently complex provisions and unfamiliar language. How did you feel the first time you heard about an IRA roll-over? Worst of all, there can be large and intricate tax consequences, reaching down through a couple of generations. You can't get much more fraughtful than that.

Your suitable design, then, will be not only gentle but patient. Unless you are writing a summary, you will do well to put only one deferred egg in each basket. At the end of the letter or flyer on one subject, it's okay to mention some other topics by name, with a promise or threat to tell all about them in the near future.

Eugene F. Gerwe, now vice president for university relations at the University of Santa Clara, was director of income trusts and bequests at Cal Tech when he said much the same thing, but for other reasons:

> In a direct mail program to stimulate deferred gifts, I think it is imperative that you plan from the very beginning to have a series of mail-ings. No single mailing, no matter how good, will produce any significant results. It is the cumu-

lative effect of a series of mailings over a period of years which will produce real success.

> For most of you this concept of a series of mailings will be the first hurdle you will have to jump on your way to a successful deferred gifts program. When you go to get budget approval for your series of mailings in these days of financial pressures in all our institutions, it is almost inevitable that your president or controller will say, 'Let's send just one mailing and see what the results are before we commit ourselves to the rest.' I can tell you before you start what the results from one mailing will be--you won't have a deferred gifts program a year from now.

Your series of mailings can be either a succession of "teasers" or a parade of detailed informative pieces. About teasers, Gerwe says:

> . . .the prime goal is to get the prospect to respond, usually by requesting more information. 'Teaser' mail normally includes a brief description of the type of deferred gift, an example showing how it could benefit the donor and your institution and, finally, a suggestion to return the enclosed card.

Teasers don't last long, so they had better be memorable: brief, accurate, and easy to understand, with excellent graphics. Properly done, they will get you a lot of readers per dollar.

The second category of broad scale mailing described by Gerwe is the informative piece:

> Here the usual approach is to focus on one type of deferred gift and provide enough information so that the mailing will serve not only to interest the prospect in this type of gift, but also to serve as a later reference. We often find our informative mailings have served as a basis for discussion between the prospect and his attorney or other advisor. Often the prospect's attorney calls to ask for further information or to arrange a meeting with his client. However, we still include a return card and envelope and find that most prospects use these to request further information.
>
> Our mailings of informative pieces are planned as a five-part package: envelope, covering letter, enclosure with detailed information, return card and return envelope. We believe that each of these

elements is a vital part of the total package: The covering letter allows a degree of personalization to the mailing that is otherwise impossible. The enclosure carries the main message. The return card gives the maximum ease of response and provides boxes which the prospect can check if he wishes further information. Incidentally, these boxes include topics from previous mailings as well as the current mailing. I am always amazed at the large number of people who ask for information on bequests when we send out a mailing on life income trusts and vice versa. Our return cards also allow space for the prospect's name, address, phone number, and comments--if he wishes.

I have a comment of my own on that last sentence: Some of your readers have reached an age where their hands waver. By using a window envelope on the outbound mailing, you can put the address label on the reply card and eliminate some distressing mysteries.

Attention. Whether you use a brochure or a letter, no matter which form of planned or deferred giving you are advocating, you are taking the long, lofty view. You are offering immortality of a sort. The words of Si Seymour quoted in the section on case statements are worth repeating here: "Most causes prosper best in terms of keeping faith with the past, keeping step with the present, and keeping some real or implied promise to posterity." For deferred gifts, this is the ideal framework for your attention-getting approach.

Interest. Even though the subject is one that makes many people uneasy, you have a lot going for you when it comes to creating interest. First, there is that little matter of immortality: "Future generations of Siwashers will honor your name."

Then, you are showing prospects how they can make gifts far more significant than they had thought possible, especially when you are talking about income-producing trusts, gifts of real estate with retained lifetime use, and so-called "bargain sale" gifts of real property. Your prospect, as you will point out with fervor, can make a truly meaningful gift to the institution and those areas of greatest interest and concern to him or her, without going to the poorhouse. "And we can thank you, not your executors," you can say, if you are intrepid (foolhardy?)

When you get into tax benefits, you can be very persuasive as long as you can avoid being very confusing. You are going to advise your reader to consult his or her tax consultant or attorney sooner or later anyway, so why not let the pros-

pect be bewildered by experts from the outset? All you do is state the tax advantages in general terms and round numbers and offer to send specific calculations to the prospects who give you the necessary details: age, gender, tax bracket, size of contemplated gift, age and gender of contingent beneficiary, and so on. Then you recommend consultation with local experts.

You will remember the Feds take a dim view of institutions that promote these gifts on the basis of tax advantages alone. Ergo, your prose will talk first about lasting honor, the excellence of your institution, its pressing needs, and all those acceptable things. Only after that will you suddenly recall that there are certain advantageous tax consequences, too.

Commitment. Many of your prospects will take that "deferred giving" title all too literally, and keep right on deferring until there's nobody left but their survivors. That is one reason for planning a series of mailings: You remind them, every month or so, that they are still deferring.

Here's an example: One college had an extremely wealthy alumnus, a senior partner in a big law firm and high in the state government. You would assume he knew about wills and bequests and estate taxes. He showed how much he loved his alma mater by throwing a giant and lavish party every year for all alumni in the major metropolitan area where he lived. When he died, at an unsurprising age, the college got nothing--not because he had left it out of his will, but because he had left no will. It is only a guess, but he was apparently superstitious about the "last will and testament" process.

That heart-rending story is unusual mainly because of its scale. Getting some people committed to making deferred gifts is almost impossible for a development writer. Your mission is to encourage them to open the door; after that, the commitment is up to a gaggle of tax consultants, attorneys, and your institutional ambassadors.

Action. Viewed in this light, the action you hope for is a returned inquiry card. To begin with, print "CONFIDENTIAL" across the top in Second Coming Boldface. People are touchy about answering the kind of questions you must ask, even touchy about admitting they might be interested.

Make the card as easy as possible to fill out, with check-off boxes, items to be circled, and no essay questions, please. Remember the suggestion about an address label for easy identification. Then, of course, a return envelope, mainly because there is no such thing as a confidential postcard. You can even print "CONFIDENTIAL" on the outside of the envelope.

DEVELOPMENT LETTERS: THE PERSONAL TOUCH

INTRODUCTION

Excluding mass-produced letters, the subject of development letters almost defies definition. You will confront an endless variety, ranging from the letter of transmittal you send with a major proposal to your reply to an alumnus who complains that the campus has changed in the last 40 years. You will be signing some yourself, and you may be ghostwriting others. All of this means that hard-and-fast rules, other than those stated by Strunk and White, do not and probably should not exist.

CHOOSING A SUITABLE DESIGN

Now that you have absorbed that wisdom, here comes a hard-and-fast rule. Before writing any development letter, ask yourself three questions:

1. To whom is it going?
2. What is it about?
3. Who is signing it?

They sound obvious, don't they? But they aren't as simple as they seem.

To Whom? As in every other kind of development writing, you will be more persuasive and successful when you keep your reader on top of your mind. Luckily for you, that is often easier with letters because they are most like one person talking with another in a quiet room. You can--and should--look up any reader you don't know in the class yearbook, Who's Who, or any other appropriate source. Maybe the class secretary remembers him or her. An alumnus in the same line of work in the same city might give you valuable information. Naturally, your letter won't brag about the gossip you have gathered this way, but your approach will be governed by what you find out.

What's it about? Your subject matter will affect your epistolatory style: You know that. A letter asking for hymn-book funding demands vocabulary and syntax different from one you would use when you want a gift for the wrestling team, even if the same person signs both letters.

Who is signing it? When your name goes on the bottom of the letter, all you have to do is express yourself with the lucid

brilliance that comes naturally. But when someone else is the supposed author, you must have an example of his or her normal writing style. Look first for the good features (there may be some) and echo them. Then look for eccentricities: Used sparingly, they can make your ghost-writing more convincing; but don't overdo it. What you write on behalf of him or her should be somewhat--but not glaringly--better than what he or she would produce if your talents were not available.

Attention: Start where your reader is. Show that you are not only aware of his or her interests, but that you (or your institution) share them. Even if you disagree fervently with what the ninnyhammer has said, start where he or she is: "Thank you for sharing your concerns with us. There are many thoughtful people who agree with you, I am sure. You may be interested in hearing why the college chose the course it did in this difficult matter."

If you happen to know a logometrician, ask him or her for a formula showing how many sentences starting with "I" or "we" are acceptable, when they begin to reduce your effectiveness, and when they become downright offensive because they start, not where the reader is, but where the writer is. Until you find a logometrician--first in your dictionary and then in your vicinity--your best move is to attack each letter draft with an "I" gouger. Gruesome as it sounds, it is often painless: "I am writing to tell you that Old Siwash's new program of nerd indoctrination is closely attuned to your own interests," works much better without the first seven words. Shorter, too.

Interest: You won't have too much of a problem when you are writing personal letters: Thanks for your gift, congratulations on your promotion, thanks for telling us of your concern. Letters like that carry their own built-in interest, especially when the stationery looks good and the address is tidily done.

A more businesslike letter to the chair of a corporate gift committee, a charitable foundation, or a major gift prospect will capture interest only if it quickly and convincingly relates the reader's interests to your subject.

Commitment: Some development letters will try for little or nothing in the way of commitment from the reader. In others, all you want is continued or restored affection for your institution. If it's really a development letter you are writing, though, you wouldn't dare miss the opportunity to throw in a gratuitous nifty about how splendidly the dear old place is progressing. Try to avoid cliche-ridden generalizations; specifics are far better. The accomplish-

ment you mention doesn't have to be a Nobel prize-winner every time. In fact, a fairly minor achievement in a field of great importance to your reader is more bewitching than national honors for a course in underwater butterfly mounting.

By contrast to those massage messages, though, many or most of your development letters will seek a measurable commitment. In those cases, you can apply the suggestions under "Interest" and "Commitment" in the case statement section of this book. Because you are writing letters, your literary style will be more relaxed, more personal, and more aware of your reader's specific concerns, but the guidelines still go in the right direction.

Action. You ask for the order in most development letters (if you ask at all) in a more gentle and courtly way than you do in direct mail for annual giving. You may even invite your prospect to visit campus to see the program or the hole in the ground and to meet the people involved. Or you may suggest a delegation to the prospect's own turf. If matters have progressed to the point where it is natural to ask for the gift here and now, encapsulate all that you have said above and conclude, "We hope you will be able to consider a gift of $9 million, payable over the next three weeks, to advance this significant effort." Or something like that.

Draft of Charlotte's Web

(6)

there was a scratching noise. Fern stepped and looked at her father. He nodded, and she opened the lid of the carton. There, standing and looking up at her, was the runty pig.

"He's yours," said Mr. Arable. "And you needn't thank me, you can thank your mother for this forbidden."

Fern couldn't take her eyes off the pig. "Oh," she said. "Oh, look at him."

Then she closed the carton. She kissed her mother, then she lifted the pig out tenderly and held it against her cheek. At this moment her brother Avery came into the kitchen. "What's that?" he demanded. "What's Fern got?"

"She's got a pig," said Mrs. Arable. "We're having antelope for breakfast. entertaining a friend and you, for breakfast. Wash your hands, Avery."

"It's a pig," said Avery, in disgust. "I want a pig, too."

said

"Let's see it!" demanded Avery. He looked into the carton. "You call that thing a pig?" he asked, in disgust. "That's a fine specimen of a pig."

"Begin your breakfast, Avery," said Mrs. Arable. "You'll be late for the school bus will be along in half an hour."

"Can I have a pig, too, Pop?" asked Avery.

distribute

"No, I only have pigs to early risers," said his Father. "Fern was up at the daylight. As a result, she now has a pig. I don't envy her. Pigs are a nuisance when you have to bottle them. Let's eat."

But Fern couldn't eat, until her pig had had a drink of milk. Mrs. Arable found a nursing bottle and fitted the nipple over the top, a nipple. She poured warm milk into the bottle and handed it to Fern. "Give him his breakfast," she said. But Fern set the bottle down on the back of the stove and went to the telephone. She cranked the phone, and

From the E. B. White Collection, Cornell University Libraries.
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HOW TO BE A GREAT WRITER:

WORK AT IT

Do your drafts ever look like the one on page 46? Why not? E. B. White's do.

What you see there is one of many drafts of Charlotte's Web. It is clear that the author had no reverence for what he had already written. He changed it while it was still in the typewriter, and went through it with two or three different pencils before retyping the mess and starting over.

Unless you are considerably better than E. B. White (hah!), you should plan numerous and harsh revisions. Write your first draft just to put some flesh and muscle on that "suitable design." Don't distract yourself with worries about how elegantly you are writing.

Read that draft, and you may find you have overdone it in some parts and brushed past others. Interruptions while you were writing your first draft may have caused you to echo convenient words too often, repeat whole phrases monotonously, or even say some things twice. Fix all that. First revision.

Cool it. Put your draft in a bottom drawer for a few days. Longer, if your schedule permits. When the heat of creation has dissipated, letting your judgment cool, review what you wrote.

Check the way it hangs together. Is it a bunch of scraps in a ragbag? Stitch those pieces tightly together, like your grandmother's quilt. Cut off the ribbons that lead nowhere, or lead somewhere you don't want to go. Second revision. Back to the bottom drawer.

Cut it. Remember what Will Strunk said, three times: "Omit needless words! Omit needless words! Omit needless words!" The next time you look at your draft, do so for one purpose only: to get rid of words that aren't carrying their weight.

Do you want a demonstration? Look at the paragraph above, uncut. It can be pared without loss to say, "Remember Will Strunk: 'Omit needless words! Omit needless words! Omit needless words!' The next time you look at your draft, do so only for that purpose." (Strunk's intentional repetition is far more forceful, though longer, than, "Remember what Will Strunk said three times. . . .")

Here's another example (and I refuse to tell you where I found it):

> Unrestricted endowment funds given by generous alumni and friends will provide steady, flexible, and highly valued support to the College. The lack of rigid restrictions upon private support would allow the College to build, develop or maintain critical areas central to its educational mission.

Doesn't look bad, at first. At second glance, it reads like what Theodore M. Bernstein would call "windyfoggery." In nearly four dozen ill-chosen words it says,

> Unrestricted endowments are highly valued. They let the College build or maintain areas critical to its mission.

Seventeen ill-chosen words.

Some of your associates probably believe every word they have written is sacrosanct. Show your superiority by being merciless with your own copy. Make a game of it: See how many blue lines you can put on a page. Third revision.

Polish it. Winkle out all the drab words that came to you so easily, and set gems in their places. This is not to say you should write like a teenager with his or her first Thesaurus. Gems should be clear, as well as colorful. You are writing in order to convince, not to parade your vocabulary.

White says, "The adjective hasn't been built that can pull a weak or inaccurate noun out of a tight place." The same goes for adverbs/verbs.) If you notice that your nouns and verbs are hiding in thickets of modifiers, it may be because they are embarrassed. Free sample:

> Few things are as important to our community as a continuing supply of trained young minds capable of meeting those contemporary problems that daily effect (sic) all aspects of our lives.

Honest! That's the opening sentence in a well-printed case statement. Not yours, one hopes.

Anybody could have written it. Most of us have, often. To polish, you would begin by spelling "affect" correctly. Then, following Elementary Principle 11 ("Put statements in positive form,") boot out "Few things are as important as. . . ." After glaring at every modifier and modifying phrase, you might end up with:

> Our community must have a continuing supply of lively minds trained to battle the problems that beseige us.

Keep your jaundiced eye out for jargon: cutting edges, interfaces, imparts (as a verb), and all those others that William Safire points out to you every Sunday. Some of your sources may even supply you with such jewels as "a student-oriented, project-centered, semi-customized experimental learning environment." (I didn't make that up, either.) English translation: "a specialized undergraduate laboratory." Say so.

Now that you are exercising your jaundiced eye, roll it in the direction of the passive voice. Sentences will be made to move more briskly when the active voice is used. That is to say, the active voice makes sentences move more briskly. Another advantage: The active voice nudges you in the direction of a more direct style. It requires you to find a subject who or which is causing whatever happens. If the passive voice is used, many pages can be covered without a real person or a concrete cause ever being revealed.

After much hard work in that vineyard, your draft is probably ready for final typing. Read the new edition first for typos, then for howlers you won't believe you could have allowed to get this far. Fix them. Your secretary is paid to be patient. Fifth revision.

That's all right. To quote E. B. White one last time, in the closing chapter of <u>The Elements of Style</u>, he says,

> "5. <u>Revise and rewrite</u>.
>
> Revising is part of writing. Few writers are so expert that they can produce what they are after on the first try. Quite often the writer will discover, on examining the completed work, that there are serious flaws in the arrangement of the material, calling for transpositions. When this is the case, he can save himself much labor and time by using scissors on his manuscript, cutting it to pieces and fitting the pieces together in a better order. If the work merely needs shortening, a pencil is the most useful tool; but if it needs rearranging, or stirring up, scissors should be brought into play. Do not be afraid to seize whatever you have written and cut it to ribbons; it can always be restored to its original condition in the morning, if that course seems best. Remember, it is no sign of weakness or defeat that your manuscript ends up in need of major surgery. This is a common occurrence in all writing, and among the best writers.

Thanks for being so persistent. May your President's Club increase.